



The Friends of the Handicapped Foundation donates over \$50,000 to Aruban Charities

For the eighteenth year, the dedicated group of island visitors and natives that make up the Friends of the Handicapped Foundation awarded the proceeds of their efforts to island charities. This year, after two very successful fundraisers, the annual Superbowl Sunday Party and the third and increasingly successful Valentine's Day Sweethearts Dinner Dance they were able to distribute \$52,000 to thirteen Aruban foundations.

During an informal ceremony in the Member's Lounge of the Aruba Beach Club on Wednesday evening, Art Stark, President of FOTH awarded the checks to representatives of the various organizations.

The recipient foundations represent a broad spectrum of groups that assist not only the physically and mentally handicapped, but has over the years expanded to include the SAMBA substance abuse rehab center, Centro Kibrihacha for the Elderly plus the AVA (Women's Auxiliary) Foundation and the Fondashon Edward Harms, providing meals and care for the bedridden and terminally ill. Social Service agencies such as Respet Ami and Fondashon Pa Nos Muchanan plus the Cas Pa Hubentud were also assisted with funds for their important work with abused children and family guidance.

Other organizations receiving donations were Sister Philote, Ambiente Felice, Funari, Bibito Pin, Te Aworo, and Sonrisa, which assist the mentally challenged, and FAVI.

During the ceremony, John Booi of FAVI (Foundation for the Visually Impaired) provided some entertainment for the gathering with his irrepressible sense of humor and a virtuoso performance on the harmonica of "You are my Sunshine." John's wife Diet, Director of CEDE Aruba was present to receive a check, also. CEDE Aruba is a supervisory agency for the other charities, and when they need additional funds for their various projects, they be provided by CEDE. All of the donated funds have been earmarked for particular projects that the various foundations need to continue their important work..

Instead of actual cash donations, some groups preferred material benefits, like the SAMBA organization, which now has the new computer they so desperately needed, compliments of the Friends of the Handicapped. It was a jubilant and moving evening as grateful recipients shared some cookies and refreshments afterwards with their benefactors.

When Keith and the late Wilma Jones started the Friends of the Handicapped in 1986 for the place they considered "right next door to heaven," they never dreamed it would grow into an organization that would raise a total of over one million dollars for the island's handicapped and needy. The seventeen members of the organization, mostly timeshare owners from the Aruba Beach Club and Casa Del Mar, with the assistance of Anouchka and Marcelino of Aruba work tirelessly during their vacation time on the two major fundraisers and auxiliary events. They are an exemplary model and inspire all of us with their generosity and spirit. Congratulations to the Friends on achieving their million-dollar goal for 2005, and a heartfelt thank-you for your kindness.